

*April 16, 2024*

## **Nutrition CEO Council Statement on Malnutrition Crisis in Gaza**

As global leaders focused on prioritizing maternal and child nutrition, we are deeply alarmed by the catastrophic hunger and spiking rates of malnutrition due to the ongoing violence and inability to deliver critical supplies like food, medical supplies, and other aid in the Gaza Strip. Since its establishment 20 years ago, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) has declared only two famines: in Somalia in 2011 and in South Sudan in 2017. The IPC projects Gaza is on track to become the third.

The population of Gaza is facing an imminent famine, with 70 percent of the population already experiencing catastrophic levels of hunger. Gaza has 346,000 children under the age of five, and they are at the greatest risk of malnutrition as the already disastrous situation rapidly deteriorates. In the north, one in three children under the age of two are now suffering from wasting, the deadliest form of undernutrition. Acute malnutrition in children under 5 has also doubled in recent months, from 13 percent to 25 percent. This severe escalation in malnutrition rates is being seen across the Gaza Strip: more than 10 percent of children under 2 in the middle area of Gaza are experiencing severe wasting, while in the southernmost enclave, where aid distribution has been highest, severe wasting has risen fourfold over the last month. Food insecurity is also impacting mothers' ability to feed their children, with many starving mothers unable to produce enough milk to breastfeed their babies, and infant formula and clean water are impossible to find.

Malnutrition is profoundly affecting hundreds of thousands of children today, but the children who survive the lack of nourishment are also likely to face lifelong health consequences, as their physical and mental growth and development have been irreversibly stunted. Psychological and physical trauma will compound their lifetime health impacts.

Gaza is also now one of the world's most dangerous places for humanitarian organizations to provide aid: more than 200 aid workers have been killed in Gaza since October. Such attacks on aid workers and food and medical distributions make delivery unsafe and have led some organizations to suspend operations in Gaza, further escalating an already dire situation. There have been continued attacks on humanitarians, food and medical aid distribution, and civilian infrastructure, including hospitals and other healthcare facilities. The compounding effects of attacks on these critical resources and the civilian infrastructure are having disastrous consequences.

There is a small window to act - right now - to prevent an outright famine. The Nutrition CEO Council calls on all parties for an immediate and lasting ceasefire, no further expansion of military operations into Rafah, and for all to work together to scale up and guarantee urgently needed food, nutrition, and medical assistance reaches the millions of people in need and ensure the safety of aid workers. Millions of lives hang in the balance.

Signed,

Joanne Carter, Executive Director, RESULTS/RESULTS Educational Fund, Co-Chair  
Rev. Eugene Cho, President and CEO, Bread for the World, Co-Chair  
Charles Owubah, CEO, Action Against Hunger  
Solianna Meaza, Interim Director, 1,000 Days of FHI 360  
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*The Nutrition CEO Council is a body of leaders from international non-governmental organizations (INGO) that aims to inspire increased support for nutrition from U.S. political leadership through high-level engagement and advance civil society advocacy, commitment, and support for nutrition as a foundational part of all development success. More information about the Council is available at [NutritionCEOCouncil.com](http://NutritionCEOCouncil.com).*